

on the demand made by them for payment of compensation and to improve their living condition; and

(d) if so, the action Government intends to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) -to (d) Information is being collected through concerned agencies and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Air Tigers' attack on Sri Lanka

3079. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has assessed the impact of the incident of the Air Tigers' attack on Sri Lankan air base in March this year taking into account our national security;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any contingency plan of action to counter any threat from the Air Tigers has been evolved;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) Government are aware of the incident of the Air Tigers' attack on Sri Lankan air base in March this year. Government have taken all necessary steps to safeguard Indian territory from such threats.

Deliberations of SAARC Summit

3080. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the major areas of deliberation of the latest SAARC Summit that are in striking contrast from earlier deliberations; and

(b) the major break-through made by SAARC Conferences in the last five years and the consequential benefit and effect occurred?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The 14th SAARC Summit held in New Delhi on April 3-4, 2007 was a landmark Summit in many respects. The salient features of the deliberations of the Fourteenth SAARC Summit, that were different from previous SAARC Summits were:

- * For the first time in its history, SAARC expanded its membership to welcome Afghanistan as its eighth member. Again, for the first time, five Observers from outside the region attended the Summit, which also decided to give a similar status to Iran.
- * The Summit adopted a comprehensive and a forward-looking Declaration, to promote regional co-operation. It underlined the collective vision of the Heads of State/Government of SAARC countries of an interconnected South Asia where there was a free flow of people, goods, services and ideas.
- * In terms of atmosphere, this was the smoothest, least contentious Summit ever. The constructive deliberations at various meetings of the Heads of State/Government, of the Council of Ministers and of Senior Officials and the high-level presence of Observers, including the expression of interest of others, are all testimony to the fact that this was recognised not just within the region, but also outside of it.
- * There was a recognition that in its third decade of existence, there was a need to move SAARC from a declaratory to an implementation phase. The focus of SAARC would be on implementing collaborative projects that would bring concrete* benefits to the people of the region. In this context, SAARC countries committed themselves to early operationalisation of the SAARC Development Fund (SDF).
- * It was agreed to improve intra-regional connectivity, particularly physical economic and people-to-pebble connectivity. The full benefits of an integrated regional multi-modal transport system were recognised. It was agreed that the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study would be extended to Afghanistan. It was also agreed that pilot projects for improving connectivity would be identified and implemented.
- * During the Summit, two important Agreements on the establishment of the South Asian University and the SAARC Food

Bank were signed. The Food Bank is an exemplary model of regional cooperation to meet collectively the region's food shortages in times of emergencies and natural calamities. The South Asian University will be developed as a centre of excellence in higher education for the entire region.

- * There was full agreement that SAFTA was one of the most successful outcomes of SAARC's collective efforts. To realise its full potential SAFTA should Integrate trade in services. The importance of implementing trade facilitation measures was also underlined.
- * The SAARC countries agreed to work together on a roadmap, *Inter alia*, in the fields of poverty alleviation, food security, energy, water environment, climate change, trade and transport, information and communication technology, tourism, education, culture and counter-terrorism.
- * The importance of people-to-people contacts^a a key constituent in regional connectivity was stressed.
- * The SAARC countries committed them selves to combat terrorism and agreed to consider India's proposal to work towards finalising an Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters.

Over the years, SAARC has established a framework to promote regional cooperation. Implementation of the decisions taken at the recent SAARC Summits would boost intra-regional trade and investment, enhance understanding through increased people-to-people contact and promote cultural exchanges and travel within the region.

Resumption of talks on Kashmir issue

†3081. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has proposed to resume the peace dialogue with India on Kashmir issue;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.